

[<Back](#) [Print](#)

News From City Council President Chuck Lesnick

January 22, 2009

[Congratulations!](#)
[Meeting Schedules](#)
[Getting a Charge Out of My Car Party at Belle Havana Wednesday!](#)
[News You Can Use](#)
[Concerned about Identity Theft?](#)
[For the Love of Reading](#)
[Free Documentary Film About Yonkers TODAY!](#)
[Jump Start Your Business](#)

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Quick Links

Congratulations!



I was pleased to join Gov. David Paterson and other elected officials in Albany at a Noon press conference yesterday for the appointment announcement of Democratic U.S. Rep. Kirsten Gillibrand to fill New York's U.S. Senate seat.

Gillibrand, a second-term lawmaker from upstate New York, replaced Hillary Clinton, who is now Secretary of State.

I wish the new Senator the best of luck in her new position. She is a tremendous advocate for war vets, farmers and small business owners. She's got a very progressive green agenda and she knows the Hudson Valley. Having worked with her at HUD, I know she is regarded as a bright attorney and a competent professional.

Some of you may remember her Director of Communications, Rachel McEneny Spencer, who used to work at the Yonkers Community Development Agency (CDA) and also produced Shakespeare plays at Untermeyer Park.

(Photo Cap: Chuck and Kirsten at a Pre- Inauguration event in Washington, DC last week.)

Meeting Schedules



I encourage everyone to attend our Tuesday, Jan. 27 meetings at City Hall. A number of things are in the works, including an opportunity for the Council to vote on Yonkers reevaluating its properties after further vetting the issue at our

7:00 p.m. Intergovernmental Relations Committee (IRC) meeting. We hope to hear from you at both meetings (IRC and the Committee of the Whole which takes place before the City Council meeting scheduled for 8:00 p.m.)

It is anticipated that "reval" will cost approximately \$4 million over a three year period which is less than the \$3.5 to 7 million the City spends and bonds every year to settle certiorari lawsuits as a result of the tax roles being out of compliance.

The resolution that Councilwoman Joan Gronowski and I put forth will request that the Mayor direct the City Assessor to undertake a reassessment of all real property within the City of Yonkers. It will also require that the Assessor report back to the Council and the public periodically, including after the responses to the RFP are received and ranked, before the Council is asked to put money in a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) to pay for it.

But first, there is a 6:30 p.m. Municipal Operations Committee meeting in the Council Chambers where Councilmember Gronowski's resolution on requesting the administration to call for professional management studies of the Yonkers Police and Fire Departments will be discussed.

At 5:30 p.m. on January 30 is a joint meeting of the Education Committee and the Intergovernmental Relations Committee at City Hall in the Council Chambers, 40 South Broadway, Yonkers.

Elected officials will be attending from the State Senate and Assembly, as well as representatives from our Congressional offices.

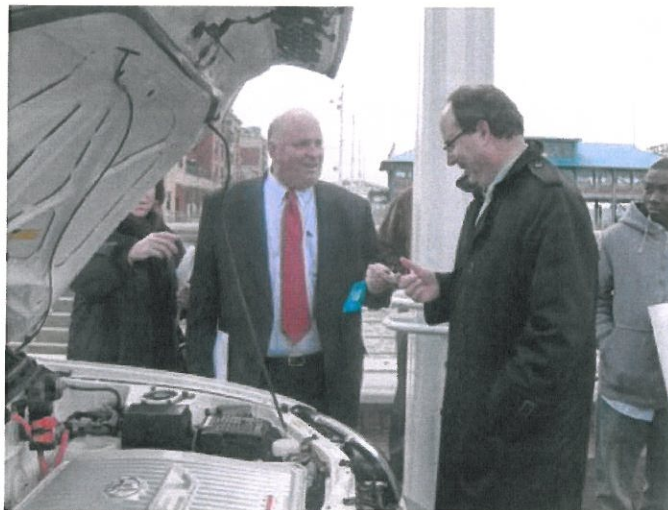
The following item(s) will be on the Agenda:

1. Update on the Yonkers Public Schools budget; NYS Budget and its effects on the Yonkers Schools, NYS Budget and its effects on local infrastructure,
2. The potential for Federal Stimulus money to fund projects in Yonkers or regional projects that might help Yonkers,
3. Any additional items that may properly come before this Committee.

Getting a Charge Out of My Car

It took 20 years for my quest to come true -- just a few days after Governor Paterson's State of the State address in which he called for research into hybrid electric batteries and energy storage technologies. This clean energy initiative is part of a major overall incentive to have 45 percent of New York's electricity produced through energy efficient and renewable energy measures by the year 2015.

I am now driving a 2003 Toyota RAV4 electric vehicle (EV) that will be used as my official city car. The cost to Yonkers taxpayers who have long-contested paying for gas to run the disproportionately large fleet of city-owned vehicles? Free,



thanks to the New York Power Authority (NYPA) who made arrangements last month to loan the car until at least August. They also paid to install the electric charger box (\$1,000) in the parking garage at City Hall. The overall savings? The vehicle runs for approximately 50 miles on under \$2 worth of electricity.

"Council President Chuck Lesnick has shown the vision, shared by the Power Authority, of a cleaner environment through the fuel-saving, emissions-reducing benefits of hybrid and electric vehicles," said Richard M. Kessel, president and chief executive officer, New York Power Authority. "Through a short-term loan to the City of Yonkers of a Toyota at the end of its demonstration role for the Power Authority, he will now have the opportunity to help to realize this vision."

Back in 1989, I called upon Westchester County to incorporate motor-vehicle pool cars fueled by electricity to help reduce America's dependence on foreign oil. I was ecstatic when told of the offer this November.

I first called my father, who owned an electric car built in the early 60's with a Hoover (the vacuum cleaner company) motor in a basic grey Renault Dauphine body. The car, called the "Henly Kilowatt" was upgraded a decade later by a local inventor before it was sold to our family as its first owners.

I fondly remember my father's electric car. The retired license plate, 30-AMP, still hangs in my garage. It had 14 rechargeable car batteries that took up all the space under the front hood and the trunk, so my dad replaced the back seat with boat cushions to provide maximum flexibility for passengers or storage.

The car went 45 to 50 mph on level ground for approximately 50 miles on a charge.

It sounded like a golf cart when it was accelerating and was completely silent when coasting or standing still. It took eight hours to fully recharge on a 110 current, but we had a special 220 line installed at our home with a timer that kicked in at midnight to take advantage of inexpensive electricity.

With no transmission, no clutch, no fan- belt, no muffler, no pistons and no other engine components to break, all my dad ever had to fix was the water level in the batteries and the occasional flat tire.

It was a great car for an over-protective parent to loan to a teen-age son because it could not go too far. It could not go too fast. And as a result of the batteries in the front and back, I could not even play, let alone blast, the radio. Of course, as the night wore on, my speed would drop. My windshield wipers would slow down and my lights would dim like a dull flashlight. I would return home on the least hilly path with full knowledge of public electric outlets, such as the one next to the Christmas tree downtown which I once had to use.

Speed up to 2009 and all that technology has changed.

- The RAV4EV holds 28 kWhs of power, the energy equivalent of about two-thirds of a gallon of gasoline, on which the car can drive about 80 miles. (The vehicle range is affected by various factors, including the type of route (hilly or flat), speed traveled, number of stops and starts, and outside temperature.) Maximum speed is 80.

- You can recharge it during off-peak hours at lower rates.

- EV's are practically maintenance-free as the brushless motors have one moving part. Regular cars have hundreds of parts, from transmissions, clutches and flywheels to spark plugs, oil pumps and pistons-- leaving thousands of things that can go wrong.

- An EV can be powered by maintenance-free lead acid batteries, Nickel Metal Hydride ("NiMH") batteries, or Lithium Ion batteries. Lithium Ion batteries have the most energy density but are also the most expensive.
- EV's have regenerative braking, meaning when you take your foot off the accelerator, the motor becomes a generator, sucking the energy of motion back into the battery.
- An EV uses no power when stopped, meaning it does not idle.
- Zero smog.
- Cal Energy Commission. They do not use engine oil and run quietly.

Photo cap: Richard Kessel, President of the New York Power Authority hands keys to an electric vehicle to Yonkers City Council President Chuck Lesnick.

Party at Belle Havana Wednesday!



More than 350 people attended the Inaugural viewing party at the Yonkers Riverfront Library on Tuesday, and more than 2 million people watched the event live in Washington -- making both events a great success!

A big thank you goes out to the Riverfront Library for hosting the viewing. Also to [Belle Havana Restaurant](#) of Main Street who not only did the catering, but who generously offered to donate a portion of their proceeds to a Barack Obama scholarship fund through the Jewish Council of Yonkers.

This offer came at a terrible time for owners Alex and Stella who were burned out of their Park Hill home over the holidays and whose business is down and suffering due to the bad economy.

While many enjoyed the Cuban sandwiches, salads bagels and more, there were unsold items which Alex gladly donated to the Sharing Community.

"Being there and being able to donate the leftover food to needy people made me feel like I was doing my part for democracy," Alex said. "It is my contribution to society."

Still, as a way to help him break even and to help further fund the scholarship, I am throwing an after work party at Belle Havana on Wednesday, February 4 from 5-8 p.m. Come thirsty and hungry!

Everyone I've mentioned this to is gung ho! They really want the party and are spreading the word already. Having said that, please [RSVP](#) with your intention to attend just to give us an idea of how many are coming. Bring friends. Everyone is welcome!

You can also send a check directly to The JCY Obama Scholarship Fund at the Jewish Council of Yonkers, 600 N Broadway, Yonkers, NY 10701 or call them at (914) 423- 5009. It could be for \$2, \$20, \$200 or \$2,000. Please give, as your contribution will help a deserving Yonkers public school student who plans a career in public service.

Belle Havana, 35 Main St., Yonkers at the corner where Warburton meets Riverdale Ave., (914) 969-1006.

(Photo cap: Alex with people from the Jewish Council at Tuesday's Inauguration Party.)

News You Can Use

A new study released by state Attorney General Andrew Cuomo reports that most of the money raised for charities by professional telemarketers in New York doesn't make it to the charity, Fundraisers keep an average of 61 cents on the dollar.

In 2007, fundraisers secured \$178.7 million in donations to 442 charities. Of that, \$108.2 million paid the telemarketers' fees and overhead costs.

"Especially in today's economy, when New Yorkers give their hard-earned money to charity, they expect the donation to make a difference and to help those in need," Cuomo said in a statement. "This report arms New Yorkers with the necessary knowledge to make informed decisions about contributing, and also encourages charities across the state to find more effective ways to raise money."

Other findings in the study include:

- In nearly 80 percent of fundraising campaigns, charities kept less than half of the money donated.
- In about half of the campaigns, charities received less than 30 percent of the funds raised.

Individuals considering making a contribution via a telemarketing appeal should ask the caller if he/she is employed by a professional fundraiser and is being paid to solicit contributions.

The law requires that telemarketers disclose this information. Also, the telemarketer should be asked:



- What programs are conducted by the charity?
 - How much of the amount raised in the campaign will go the charity and how much will to go the fundraiser?
 - Has the fundraiser guaranteed that the charity will retain a specific amount?
- Contributors should also remember that they always have the option of contributing directly to a charity.

Potential contributors should also review a charitable organization's annual reports as well as information received directly from the organization before donating. Annual reports for charities registered with the New York State Attorney General may be obtained from the organization or the Charities Bureau.

For more information, click [here](#).

Concerned about Identity Theft?



The Mobile Shredder is coming to Yonkers (for residents only) on Saturday, Jan. 31 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Yonkers Recycling Center, 735 Saw Mill River Road.

What should you shred?

- Pre-approved credit card applications, old credit card bills, receipts, bank statements, old tax returns or any other documents containing your name, address and other identifying information.

- Paper generated by businesses, schools, institutions, government or municipal offices is not accepted at these events. County staff will inspect all paper to be shredded and will reject any paper identified as commercial or institutional.

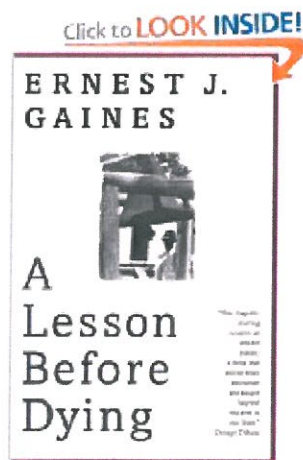
- Each resident may bring a maximum of 4 file boxes, approximately 10" by 12" by 15" in size.

- All paper must be free of clips, bindings, folders and files.

- No bound or hardcover ledger books are allowed.

For questions about recycling, call the Recycling HelpLine at 211 or click [here](#) for the county's website.

For the Love of Reading



If you're interested in reading a selection from "A Lesson Before Dying" during The Big Read Community Read Aloud on January 31, 2009, contact [The Westchester Arts Council](#) or call 914.428.4220 x233.

The Read Aloud is a public program developed to engage teens and adults in reading-and discussing-a powerful, beautifully written book, ["A Lesson Before Dying" by Ernest J. Gaines](#).

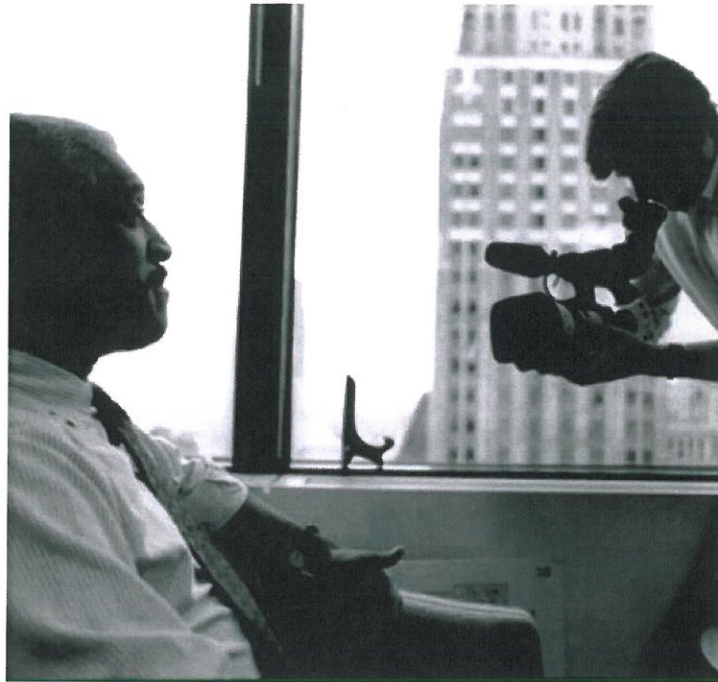
The program is being done in partnership with Westchester Community College and Westchester Library System, Hudson Valley Writers Center, The Links, Youth Theatre Interactions, and community groups across the county.

Free Documentary Film About Yonkers TODAY!

The Yonkers Public Library and the [Hudson River Museum](#) collaboration continues today with a screening of "Brick by Brick: A Civil Rights Story" from 2-4 p.m. today, Jan. 24 at the Yonkers' Riverfront Library, 1 Larkin Center.

The one hour documentary is about a contemporary American battle for civil rights. It follows three families in Yonkers in the middle of a confrontation about the politics and law of racial discrimination in housing and schools that challenges and changes their hometown.

Following the film will be a discussion and question and answer session with special guests William Kavanagh, film producer and director; Gene Capello, Yonkers resident featured in the film; and Winston Ross, former President of Yonkers' NAACP chapter.



For more information, call (914) 963-4550.

Jump Start Your Business

The Yonkers Downtown Waterfront BID in cooperation with the Yonkers Public Library has organized four Sunrise Seminars for small businesses focusing on marketing, merchandising, finance, and the environment.

The first seminar - "How to Market in a Down Economy" is Tuesday, January 27 at 8 AM at the Riverfront Library. Click [here](#) for more information.

Topics for future seminars are: Banking for Your Small Business; Curb Appeal (The Importance of Attractive Storefront Design and Visual Merchandising), and Eco Mania (The Environmental & Other Benefits of Making Your Business Green).

Seminars are free and open to the public. Light refreshments will be served. Each seminar will last approximately 1 hour.

You can RSVP by calling the BID office at 914-969- 6660.

Edited by Laura Fahrenthold

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